DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 392 282 FL 023 630

AUTHOR Yardley, Gabriel A. J.
TITLE Poetry, Painting and Conversation in Comparative Compositions. (An Exercise in Integrating Discourse Markers).
PUB DATE [95]
NOTE 16p.; Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages (29th, Long Beach, CA, March 26-April 1, 1995).
PUB TYPE Reports - Descriptive (141) -- Speeches/Conference Papers (150)

EDRS PRICE MF01 Plus Postage. PC Not Available from EDRS.
DESCRIPTORS *Art Appreciation; Class Activities; Classroom Techniques; *English (Second Language); Higher Education; Oral Language; *Poetry; Second Language Instruction; Skill Development; Speech Skills; *Writing (Composition); *Writing Instruction

ABSTRACT

An oral activity designed to help prepare college students of English as a second language for assignments and rhetorical strategies for essay writing is described. The activity, which comprises several tasks and can require up to two class periods, requires students to compare and contrast a painting and a poem that have a common theme or aspect. Pre-writing tasks include paired observations and note-taking on specified aspects of the works, then oral comparisons using specific sentence- and clause initial discourse markers and transitions (e.g., "similarly, moreover, therefore"). Written tasks include: a 20-minute free-writing session in which students write a summary of the comparison, using the discourse markers; an exchange of summaries with partners and a revision using alternative discourse markers; and a homework assignment consisting of an expanded written comparison. Followup activities included an oral in-class summary, incorporation of new transition terms, another partner-exchange with revision, an additional revision by the original author, a comparison of the three versions, and a discussion session on the discourse markers and transitions. The painting and text used in the class are appended, with additional ideas for instructional materials and a worksheet. (MSE)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

Gabriel A.J. Yardley

Poetry, Painting and Conversation in Comparative Compositions.
(An Exercise in Integrating Discourse Markers)

ED 392 282

How about taking a break from the often worthy but sometimes uninspiring exercises designed to prepare EFL students for college-level assignments and rhetorical strategies in essay writing? Oral activities incorporating poems and classic art can generate a variety of bridging activities which can be exploited to make the approach to comparative and contrastive writing challenging, different and interesting for learners.

Baxter (1992), notes that his although his students in Italy are lively in oral work, "they are rather less enthusiastic about writing (p. 26)," and when one sees the stolid, dry fare offered by some texts, it is not surprising that some students find it difficult to relate to a particular exercise beyond seeing it as one more assignment to be completed by a certain date. Many EFL instructors rely on texts specially produced for this purpose, and while the focus is indeed on writing, few make any real reference to the beneficial role that *oral* activities can have on writing, particularly those texts dealing with the usual rhetorical styles of writing. Hedge (1989), suggests that the instructor's task is to design activities which will support the learner through the process of producing a particular piece of writing. Exercises and materials which are 'different,' and go beyond the usual textbook offerings can generate a high level of curiosity and motivation and can further be used to introduce or reinforce use of a wide variety of discourse markers or transitions. Integrating writing with oral tasks can actively complement the usual process-oriented approach and present learners with a novel and challenging activity for generating a comparative-contrastive essay, and, additionally, with an instrument for a readily discernible improvement in writing abilities.

This activity, which comprises several tasks and can require up to two 50 minute periods, requires students to compare and contrast a painting and a poem which share a similar theme or aspect; in this case the painting by Bruegel, The Return of the Hunters, and Robert Frost's poem Stopping By Woods on a Snowy Evening, both of which are set in a snowy, wintry landscape.

Pre-writing tasks

For a preliminary information-gap task, the colour master copy of the painting is to be placed where everyone has a good view of it, and copies of both painting and poem are distributed to pairs of learners who are asked to consider the content of both the poem and the painting, and make brief notes on the similarities and differences between them for 15 minutes.[1] Adjectives noting points of similarity and contrast may be listed in a summary box such as that in Figure 1 which gives guidance as to what to look for, at least initially, instead of just being told vaguely to discuss the painting and the poem.

FL023630

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL IN **OTHER THAN PAPER COPY** HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

Gabriel A.J. Yardley

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)"

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)
☒ This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.
☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.
• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

Figure 1

First Impresssions	Bruegel	Frost
Nature		
Activity	*(skating, chopping firewood,...)*	
Landscape		
Colour		*(black and white...)*
Time	*(late afternoon,...)*	
Atmosphere	*(lively, noisy,...)*	*(quiet,...)*
etc		

The instructor does not need to be an art expert, although some background reading can enable us to nonchalantly give the impression of knowing a lot about a particular artist or poet and thus making the painting and the poem seem more alive and interesting to the learners.[2]

Transitions need to be actively *used* as part of every-day speech. What learners don't speak they won't write, thus the incorporating of discourse markers through oral activites can greatly improve elegance and fluency in conversation, and consequently in writing. Many University and College EFL students are acquainted with a large variety of transitions or discourse markers -most of my intermediate Japanese students can recall their syntactic features in detail, and yet they hesitate to consistently use much more than *and*, *also* and *but* in either conversation or extended written work. A number of textbooks present such transitions in lists or boxes, but beyond being often accompanied by a set of useful but not particularly inspiring 'fill-in-the-blank' exercises, the learner is not encouraged to internalize their use as part of a challenging and interesting experience.

Subsequently, following the filling in of the table in Figure 1, learners were asked to compare orally, their observations regarding the painting and the poem, the stipulation being made that each time an item of comparison or

contrast was discussed, a transition from the list in Figure 2 had to be incorporated into the conversation. This task lasted for 10 minutes.[3]

Figure 2

Sentence/Clause-initial discourse markers/transitions				
Comparison	**Contrast**	**Addition**	**Cause or Effect**	**Summary**
In the same way	However	Furthermore	Accordingly	All in all
Likewise	In contrast	In addition	As a result	Finally
Similarly	Conversely	Additionally	Consequently	In brief
Compared to	Nevertheless	Moreover	Therefore	In short
Compared with	Even so		Thus	To conclude
	Whereas			In conclusion
	While			
	On the one hand			
	On the other hand			

Many of the students vied with each other, jokingly at first, to follow my seemingly ridiculous demands that *every time* they said anything about the painting or poem, the comment was to be prefaced with a transition from the list; if anything, the activity was exaggeratedly successful in generating use of discourse markers

Written work

Following the conversation work, there was a 20 minute free-writing session in which they were to:

1: write a 100 word summary in pencil comparing the painting and poem, and
2: incorporate at least 10 underlined discourse markers.

When the 15 minutes were up, the learners were asked during a further 5 minutes to:

3: exchange their summaries with a partner; and;
4: provide appropriate *alternative* transitions for all underlined transitions.

For homework, all the class were asked:

5: to write a 450 word comparison of the painting and poem;

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

6: to observe the usual conventions of essay writing: eg.appropriate thesis sentence, topic sentence, paragraph structure, etc;
7: to use a point-by-point or a block-method style for the essay;
8: to include at least 40 underlined transitions from their editions of the Writer's Handbook (McKernan, 1991, pp. 142-3), and,
9: to bring 2 further (photo)copies of their essays to the next class (Copies 1, 2 and 3).

As Rooks (1988) points out, the following structures often accompany the development of a contrast and comparison paragraph as it emphasizes the similarities and differences between the two subjects under discussion (p. 26). The instructor may wish to use the summary exercise and homework assignment to ask learners to reproduce similar sentence structure patterns to those in Figure 3.[4]

Figure 3

Pattern showing similarity:

Bruegel describes a snow-filled landscape;	likewise, similarly, in the same way , in the same manner,	Frost also dwells on a snowy scene

Patterns showing contrast:

Bruegel fills his winter scene with people;	in contrast, contrastingly, conversely, on the other hand, however,	Frost depicts a man and his horse.

Pattern to show concession:

Despite the fact that In spite of the fact that Although Even though Whereas While	the dogs emphasize companionship, the horse reflects independent solitude.

Follow up

In the next class, as a reinforcing task, prior to giving in their assignments, students were asked to:

1: summarise orally, not read, the contents of their essay, and,
2: to incorporate transitions referring to *addition* and *summary* from Figure 2.

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

They had also been asked beforehand to delete 20 transitions from Copy 2 of their essay. The following revision tasks also took place:

> **1**: Copy 2 was given to a partner who was given 10 minutes to suggest a transition for every blank space and an *alternative* transition for the remaining 20 transitions;
> **2**: in Copy 3, the writer was given 5 minutes to superimpose (in pencil) *and*, *but*, *also* or *as well* wherever possible in place of the original transitions;
> **3**: partners were then asked to compare the transitional changes they had made to Copy 2; and,
> **4**: were then asked to read their Copy 3 full of *and*s and *but*s and to reflect on which Copy, 1 or 3, *sounded* better and why.

Copy 1 of the essay was collected for marking, and Copy 3 was given to the partner for peer-editing. On being marked, the essays were returned from both instructor and peer-editor with comments on a grade sheet.[5]

As a final conversation activity, suggested improvements were summarised by the partners using transitions from the table in Figure 2. The essays were re-written and a final version with no underlining turned in for my records. They also received a mini-essay from me.[6] Apart from the usual organisational, spelling and grammar errors, it was surprising just how many transitional items were aptly used (by some, for the very first time) although a few learners were not aware of semantic differences and usage of *on the contrary* and *on the other hand*, and *finally* and *in the end*. Still others were confused by the differences between the point-by-point method and the block method, and some even thought that Frost was humping his weight about on a *little horse*![7]

Conclusions

A number of texts such as those by Hedge (1989), and Behrman (1990), do make some use of conversation activities to aid the composing process, yet most, if at all, only use these activities as a preliminary warm-up, serving merely as an exchange of ideas and impressions or brainstorming before getting down to the nitty-gritty of writing. Speaking is seen merely as facilitating the collating of information that will form the basis of what is to be written, not as the very necessary catalyst and complement of the written word.

Conversational exercises act as catalysts for what learners are able to be coaxed into producing. Some learners perceive many transitional devices to be part of a more formal code of communication, a set of lexical structures to be used in writing and observed in reading, and rarely to be used in speech. They recognise their function in signalling and linking a certain relationship and interplay of ideas and information, yet usually avoid oral production of these in class. Speaking complements writing; if the learner has little practice in using transitional elements orally, it is unlikely that these will be used spontaneously in writing.[7] Use of transitions or discourse markers are areas in which significant and obvious improvements may be made in productive areas of language use. It is also important that learners are able to perceive a noticeable improvement in written work, not just because they

are getting a better grade and so therefore *must* be improving, but in a way that actually shows them *how* their work is approaching a more native-like fluency and elegance.

Sustained periods of "quiet" reflective writing are a very necessary part of a writing course at college level, yet an oral task-attack strategy encourages learners to develop a readier familiarity with transitional devices through oral practice and production, which goes beyond mimicry of a strict parallel production process, and enables them to reproduce these with greater facility in written work.

Maley's observation regarding the acquisition of vocabulary in his introduction to Morgan and Rinvolucri's Vocabulary (1986), notes that words are not learnt mechanically as little packets of meaning, but associatively. Rather than being prodded in the direction of various rhetorical models in the usual texts, a process-oriented *oral* approach incorporating art and poetry (music too) may be used to motivate the learner through *communicative* and *associative* aspects of essay planning, drafting and revising.[8]

Notes

1 Copyright regulations do not usually permitted multiple copying of printed materials. Where copyright laws are not being infringed, it may be useful to make an enlarged colour copy of the reproduction from a good art book for your own use. Students may then consult your colour copy and the original in the text. An alternative, where possible, is to download images from the Internet from sites such as:

http://sunsite.unc.edu/otis/otis.html, and

http://sgwww.epfl.ch/BERGER/index.html

This illustration of The Return of the Hunters (on display at the Kunsthistorisches Museum in Vienna) in **Appendix 1** was downloaded from:

http://www.emory.edu/ENGLISH/classes/Paintings&Poems/winter.jpg

In order to view the image on MS-Word for the Mac you may require JPEG shareware and Quicktime.

2 It is more interesting to the student if the literature and artwork used are more culture-specific. Japanese students might prefer to compare a work by contemporary Japanese artist Yamagata, who, like Bruegel, also likes to paint 'busy' peopled scenes with a paasage from Kawabata's Snow Country. If an overhead projector is available, tables and possibly a colour impression of the painting as well as the poem can be placed in view of everybody and to be used again in the following class. Art related vocabulary may also be introduced at this stage as for example, that provided by B J Thomas in Advanced Vocabulary and Idiom. (Edinburgh: Nelson 1991)

3 Similar lists are provided in the following texbooks:

George M. Rooks, Paragraph Power (New York: Prentice-Hall, 1988)

Harvey S. Wiener, Creating Compositions. 6th ed. (New York: McGraw Hill, 1992)

4 Other examples also based on Rooks (1988) describing contrast:

	nonetheless	different from	
Bruegel is	nevertheless	unlike	Frost in his description of a winter's eve.
	however		Frost in his treatment of a winter's eve.

Unlike Frost,	nevertheless,	Bruegel presents a more cheerful end to the day.
Different from Frost	however,	

5 The grading sheet in **Appendix 2** is adapted from Cummings and Genzel (1989).

6 Where possible, the instructor should also write an essay which should be given out as an example, and for learners to pick holes in! An example of a model (?) essay is provided in **Appendix 2**.

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

7 Some may argue that a writing class is not the place for conversation, yet a good many of the more transitional elements present in written language lend a fluid and cohesive elegance to the spoken language which is lacking in the English of many non-native speakers. Having a good 'vocabulary' is not the same as sounding fluent, and it is the appropriate use of relatively simple yet often cursorily dealt with transitional items such as these that will enable a speaker to be perceived as being more native-like. The more such words become part of the learner's spoken repertoire, the more likely it is that they will be found in their writing. One will complement the other and lead to more frequent use in spoken and written language.

8 The following are optional tasks to introduce comparison and contrast and transitions:

1: In the preceding class, students are requested to exchange with a partner two of their favourite English songs (L1 songs may also be used) on tape and a copy of the lyrics.

2: For homework, learners are to analyse their partners' songs and lyrics and make notes on similarities and contrasts regarding theme/instrumentation/rhythm/tone, etc. This is followed by a discussion period of 10 minutes in the following class using the tabled transitions in figure 2.

Other artwork, poems and music which may be used for this or other writing exercises are suggested below, and further resources are referred to in **Appendix 3**:

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

Structure of essay	Art	Poetry / Music (m)
Comparison and contrast	*The Stages of Life* Caspar Friederich	*Crossing the Bar* A L Tennyson *Do Not Go Gentle Into That Good Night* Dylan Thomas
Comparison and contrast		*Me, Myself and I* (m) Billie Holliday *Tonight at Noon* Adrian Henri
Comparison and contrast	*The Arnolfini Marriage* Jan van Eyck *Bratsk, Sibérie. 1967 (photo)* Elliot Erwitt	
Directional Process	*Inventions* W H Robinson	*Deaf Donald* Shel Silverstein
Cause and effect	*Les Amants* Magritte	*Love-40* R McGough
Description	*Bratsk, Sibérie. 1967 (photo)* Elliot Erwitt	

The Return of the Hunters (1565)

Pieter Bruegel the Elder (1525/30-69)

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening

Whose woods these are I think I know.
His house is in the village though;
He will not see me stopping here
To watch his woods fill up with snow.

My little horse must think it queer
To stop without a farmhouse near
Between the woods and frozen lake
The darkest evening of the year.

He gives his harness bells a shake
To ask if there is some mistake.
The only other sound's the sweep
Of easy wind and downy flake.

The woods are lovely, dark and deep.
But I have promises to keep,
And miles to go before I sleep,
And miles to go before I sleep.

Robert Frost (1874-1963)

Appendix 2

Name	**Grade**
	Organisation:
Assignment Version	**Language:**
	Content:

Organisation	*Comments*
1 Topic Sentence	
2 Introduction	
3 Support. Inform.	
4 Transitions	
5 Conclusion	
Sentence Struct.	
6 S/Vb Agreement	
7 Other	
Verbs	
8 Verb Forms	
9 Verb Tense	
10 Other	
Language	
11 Thesaurus	
12 Spelling	
13 Word Forms	
14 Redund.ant W'dg	
15 Non Specific Lang.	
16 Misused Words	
17 Articles	
Punctuation	
18 Comma	
19 Other	
Proof-reading	
Frequent Mistakes	

Adapted from Cummings and Genzel (1989)

Bruegel's *The Return of the Hunters* and Frost's *Stopping By Woods on a Snowy Evening* both describe a winter's scene. Snow, and the coldness of winter, feature in both painting and poem; nature is also a central element. In addition, both depict a winter's evening which awaits the onset of night. Nevertheless, while both may have these elements in common, these similarities appear to serve only as a point of departure for poet and artist as they focus on differing aspects of winter, and a number of contrasts which represent this approach may briefly be referred to.

It is cold, yet there is the warmth of humanity and a feeling of security and companionship in the painting. There are signs of domestic comfort and basic creature comforts. At the ridge of the hill a group of people are roasting a pig; one can almost hear the fire crackling, the birds twittering on the branches and the shouts and laughter of those playing on the ice-covered pond. In contrast however, in the poem, night is falling and the rider is nowhere near home: no living thing is to be seen or heard except for the bells of the horse:

> He gives his harness bells a shake
> To ask if there is some mistake.
> The only other sound's the sweep
> Of easy wind and downy flake.

It could be said that these only serve to bring the rider out of his reverie and to remind him that he has far to go. It is also interesting to note that the image of a solitary rider on horseback conveys an image of loneliness. A lone rider on horseback is often interpreted as symbolic of rugged independence, yet as the horse stops "Between the woods and frozen lake," the picture is not one of independent man, but man isolated. In contrast, the painting depicts a pack of hunting dogs, thus further emphasizing a sense of the companionship, with man's indispensable 'best friend,' his dog, in evidence. The frozen lake is forbidding and emphasizes the coldness of "The darkest evening of the year." In the painting however, a frozen river and pond are scenes of diversion and merriment, and here too, can be seen nature complementing the commotion of life, the stark inactivity of the poem contrasting with the lively and joyful recreation present in the painting.

Although the hunters might be tired and weary, they nevertheless have warmth, food and rest to look forward to and to spur them on the last few yards. Contrastingly, in the poem, the rider has stopped, almost mesmerized by the scene stretching out before him as he watches the "woods fill up with snow." The woods look inviting, yet he has "promises to keep," and the reader can almost feel the implied weariness and sleepless distance that the rider has to go, in the alternating rhythmic weak-strong stress, of the final two lines: "And miles to go before I sleep / And miles to go before I sleep." In both we are in the heart of winter, with night soon to fall: in one we witness a homecoming; in the other, the undertaking of a journey.

Frost is part of the landscape's solitude, of nature at its loneliest; in Bruegel, nature, as mentioned earlier, is an integral part of various social activities, for example, hunting, skating, and the stoking of a fire. In the poem however, nature is central to an absence of activity: the 'white' and 'black' of the "Snowy Evening," in its title may be interpreted as reflecting this absence, and may be said to represent an absence of colour and to be symbolic of nothingness.

It may thus be said that while these two differing forms of artistic expression depict a winter's scene, the differing approach of both artist and poet create landscapes which, while sharing certain elements, nevertheless contrast sharply in both mood and atmosphere.

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

Appendix 3

Selected resources

Visual

Bruegel, Pieter. The Return of the Hunter.

Erwitt, Elliot. Bratsk, Sibérie, 1967 (Éditions Hazan, Paris)

Friederich, Casper David. The Stages of Life.

Magritte, R. Les Amants.

Robinson, W. Heath. Inventions.

van Eyck, Jan. The Arnolfini Marriage.

Audio

L'áprès midi d'un faun. Claude Debussy

In the Lap of the Gods, from *Pyramid* by The Alan Parsons' Project

Every Breath You Take. Sting

Me, Myself and I. Billie Holliday

Poetry

Crossing the Bar. Alfred, Lord Tennyson (1809-1892)

Do Not Go Gentle Into That Good Night. Dylan Thomas (1914-1953)

Deaf Donald. Shel Silverstein (1952-)

40- Love. Roger McGough (1941-)

Marriage. Kalil Gibran (1883-1931)

Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening. Robert Frost (1874-1963)

The Night Was Growing Cold. Anonymous

Poetry and Art Booklist

Boring, Walter. Hieronymous Bosch. Cologne: Taschen 1973

Gardner, Helen, ed. The New Oxford Book of Verse. Oxford: OUP 1990

Handa, Masao. Enjoyment of English Poetry. Tokyo: The Hokuseido Presss 1969

McGough, Roger, ed. The Kingfisher Book of Comic Verse. London: Kingfisher Books 1989

Murata Tatsuo, & Norman Angus, eds. More Poetry Please! Tokyo: Nan'un-Do 1990

Silverstein, Shel. A Light in the Attic. New York: HarperCollins1981

Sky-Peck, Kathryn, ed. Who Has Seen the Wind? New York: Rizzoli Int'l Publications 1991

The Art Book. London: Phaidon Press 1994

Viazey, Marina. 100 Masterpieces of Art. London: Peerage Books 1989

Bibliography

Baxter, Chris. "Make your own newspapers." Practical English Teaching 13:1 (1992): pp 26-7

Cummings, Martha G., & Rhona B. Genzel. Writing Your Way. New York: Newbury House 1989

Hedge, Tricia. Writing Resource Books for Teachers. Oxford: OUP 1989

Kitao S. Kathleen, & Kenji Kitao. From Paragraphs to Essays. Tokyo: Eichosha 1993

Kwan-Terry, Anna. Interactive Writing. New York:Prentice-Hall 1988

Maley, Alan, Alan Duff, and Françoise Grellet. The Mind's Eye. Cambridge: CUP 1986

McKernan, John. The Writer's Handbook. 2nd ed. Fort Worth: Holt, Rhinehart and Wilson 1991

Morgan, John, & Mario Rinvolucri. Vocabulary: Resource Books for Teachers Oxford: OUP 1986

Rooks, George M. Paragraph Power. New York:Prentice-Hall 1988

Thomas, B. J. Advanced Vocabulary and Idiom. Edinburgh: Nelson 1991

Wiener, Harvey S. Creating Compositions. 6th ed.New York: McGraw Hill 1992

BEST COPY AVAILABLE